

SAFETY ON THE LINE

A service of the NASA KSC Spaceport Services Directorate

February 2001 vol. 01

“One’s best success comes after their greatest disappointments. --”

- Henry Ward Beecher

Employee Hearing Loss



A recent National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

study indicates that **“work related hearing loss is one of the most common occupational diseases in the United States and the second most self-reported occupational illness or injury”**.

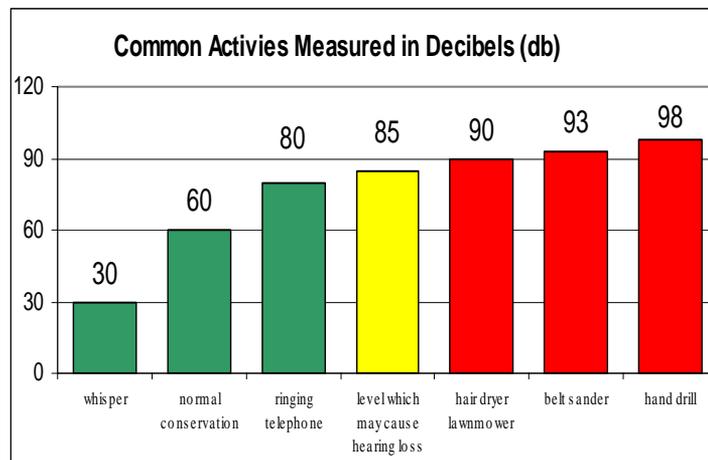
According to NIOSH, about 30 million Americans are exposed to hazardous noise at work with about 9 million experiencing permanent hearing loss. **The GOOD NEWS is that while noise induced hearing loss is 100% preventable, the BAD NEWS is that hearing loss is permanent and irreversible.**

Surprisingly, some home related activities such as using a hair dryer, vacuum cleaner, or lawnmower can produce noises that either approach or exceed noise limits that can damage human hearing. Sound is measured in decibels (db) and the chart below shows some common household activities and their related db values. **Prolonged exposure to noise above 85 db can cause hearing loss.** However, short intense sounds, such as an explosion, for example, can cause immediate hearing loss. But usually, hearing loss occurs so gradually from prolonged exposure to loud noises that the person doesn’t even realize it. Over time, sounds may simply become muffled or distorted.

To see if you may be in an environment (workplace or at home) that could cause hearing loss, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the noise so loud that I have to raise my voice significantly for someone an arm's length away to hear me?
- When I leave the work environment and am in a quieter environment, do my ears feel plugged? Or do I hear a mild ringing or whooshing noise that goes away after an hour or two?

If you answer yes to either of these questions: Get your hearing tested - **and protect your ears!**



This study also showed that only 39% of adults have had a hearing test in the last three years. Anyone regularly exposed to hazardous noise should have an annual hearing test. Also, anyone who notices a change in his/her hearing should have his or her ears checked. People who have healthy ears and who are not exposed to hazardous noise should get a hearing test every three years.



The fog that central Florida experienced last month was the result of cool nights and warm days, something we can expect for the next several months. Fog can injure or kill because drivers fail to adjust their driving habits. When driving in fog, slow down, use low beams only, and leave earlier in the morning when you know that fog is probable. That way, we all get to work safely and on time.



Do you have questions, comments, or an article you would like to submit? Contact Alan at 867-7554, fax number 867-1120, mail code TA-C1 or e-mail him at "Safety on the Line" found in your global address list. Safety on the Line is also on the Web. Go to the KSC home page, then click on KSC internal page, then find us under NASA/KSC news.